

Testimony for the Joint Subcommittee on Human Services
February 4, 2011
In-Home Family Based Services (FBS)

Last year Friends To Youth provided in-home services to 66 children in 37 families in Missoula, Ravalli, and Mineral Counties. The work is intense during the four months that we are usually involved in a family's life. Most often, we are in each family home twice per week, for at least two hours each time. There is much collateral work to do plus calls from the family in between visits, and for some families there is significant travel time to get to their home. You can imagine that the cost adds up.

In spite of this, the average cost to provide this service last year was still *less* than what it would have cost to have a child in regular foster care. On average the cost per child for four months of services in the home is \$1,720. Foster care for one child for four months is \$1,985.

At first glance this may not seem like a significant difference, but keep in mind that the figure for foster care does NOT include CPS staff time, legal costs, the cost of providing supervised visits for a child in care, and the cost of training and licensing the foster home. In addition, not all children go into regular foster care. Treatment level foster care is sometimes needed and that can cost twice as much. Group home care can cost twice to eight times as much.

This is *not* an argument that we can replace foster care with in-home services! Indeed, there are children who would not be safe without offering the alternative that out-of-home care provides.

But this *is* an argument to put in-home services funding back in the budget. It needs to be in the mix, to be offered wherever it *is* appropriate.

Without in-home services, families lose. They lose the support to stay together when they can safely do so with help. They lose needed support to rebuild and reunify their family after foster care when placement was determined necessary as a temporary measure to keep kids safe.

Without in-home services, society loses. If in-home services would have been more appropriate, we lose tax dollars when we instead place kids in foster care or a group home. We lose when kids stay in out-of-home care longer because there is no in-home support for the family that could help kids return home sooner. And we lose when we unnecessarily squander valuable family connections because we don't have in-home services available to support the required best efforts to keep families together whenever safe and appropriate. When family connections *can* be safely and effectively supported in-the-home the value to all of us is priceless.

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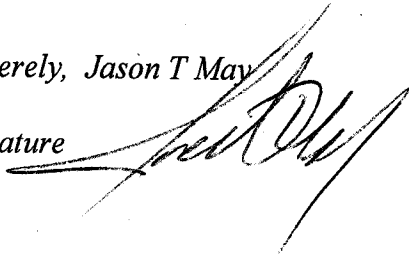
2/3/2011

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in regards to the funding that the agency Friends To youth receives on behalf of the clients that receive their services in their homes. I Jason May am one of these people. I became one of these clients in 2010 and am currently still a client, although I am in the office setting now. Friends to youth is a very important resource for many families as in my case, the in home visits are critical as an example me, it was required for me to have a set amount of hours in this setting as per the state department of child services. Friends to youth was very helpful in negotiating with the state and makes very good use of these funds, I continue using the services they provide, because of the fact that they show concern for all families in need and do what is in there means even above and beyond I am asking for you to please grant the funds needed for these services to continue to the state so these wonderful services that are so vital for many families to have normal happy and strong families can continue, thank you very much for taking the time to read this and hope that you will take this into consideration when you make a decision.

Sincerely, Jason T May

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason T May', written over a horizontal line.